

Message Text

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11
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /050 W
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R 130400Z NOV 76
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7303
USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2674

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PDIP PINS LA US
SUBJECT: LAO CENSORSHIP OF FOREIGN PRESS BULLETINS

REF: A VIENTIANE 2628, B VIENTIANE 2643, C VIENTIANE 2654,
D STATE 274317

1. PAO CALLED ON CHIEF OF MFA PRESS RELATIONS KITHONG VONGSAY TO LEARN MFA'S POSITION ON CONTINUED DISTRIBUTION OF USIS DAILY BULLETIN. PAO HAD SENT LETTER TO KITHONG ON NOVEMBER 9 CONVEYING INFORMATION REQUESTED IN MFA NOTE OF NOVEMBER 4 (REF A) AS PRIOR CONDITION TO AUTHORIZING FOREIGN PRESS BULLETINS AND NEWS RELEASES. KITHONG SAID HE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED LETTER. COPIES WERE HAND DELIVERED AS SOON AS MEETING WAS ENDED. KITHONG PROMISED A REPLY BY NOVEMBER 15.

2. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH CHIEF LOCAL WHO DELIVERED COPIES, KITHONG SAID THAT MFA'S MAIN CONCERN WAS TO KEEP CONTROL ON INFORMATION BULLETINS IN ORDER TO PREVENT ATTACKS ON OTHER NATIONS WITH WHOM LPDR HAD FRIENDLY RELATIONS AND WHICH WOULD CAUSE EMBARRASSMENT TO LPDR. HE INTIMATED THAT BULLETINS THAT AVOIDED SUCH PROVOCATIVE MATTER WOULD BE PERMITTED.

3. IF MFA APPROVES USIS DAILY BULLETIN IN PRINCIPLE, MAJOR TEST COULD COME WHEN WE RECEIVE STATEMENT ON US
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RELATIONS WITH USSR, PRC, SRV OR OTHER COMMUNIST COUN-

TRIES WHICH WE BELIEVE MFA WOULD INTERPRET AS FALLING WITHIN PROSCRIBED AREA. WE WOULD PROPOSE USE SUCH STATEMENTS, USUALLY IN SHORTENED FORM, TO CONVEY ESSENTIAL POSITION, WHILE AVOIDING CHARACTERIZATIONS WHICH WE BELIEVE WOULD PROVOKE LPDR TO ATTEMPT CENSORSHIP. EMBASSY COULD SEE THAT IMPORTANT STATEMENTS ON U.S. RELATIONS WITH LPDR, USSR, PRC AND SRV REACHED KEY PEOPLE IN MFA AND PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE TO KEEP THEM INFORMED ON U.S. POSITIONS AFFECTING THEMSELVES AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF COMMUNIST BLOC.

4. OUR APPROACH WOULD SERVE TO MEET BULLETIN'S PURPOSE WHICH IS BROADER THAN SIMPLY KEEPING GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE AT LARGE INFORMED OF SPECIFIC U.S. VIEWS ON OUR RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST BLOC COUNTRIES. THERE IS STILL A WIDE AUDIENCE FOR GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT U.S., INDICATED BY THE NUMBER OF PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS, SCHOOLS, MONKS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICES WHO HAVE ASKED TO BE PUT ON BULLETIN DISTRIBUTION LIST OVER PAST FEW MONTHS. ALTHOUGH AUTHORITY GOVERNMENT GREATLY REDUCES OR ELIMINATES ALTOGETHER ABILITY OF SUCH AUDIENCE TO EXPRESS ITS OPINION ON U.S.-LPDR RELATIONS, THIS IS NOT AN AUDIENCE THAT WE SHOULD GIVE UP LIGHTLY. IT INCLUDES MID-LEVEL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO MAY SOME DAY RISE TO PROMINENCE IN LPDR BUREAUCRACY, TEACHERS AND MONKS WHO ALREADY EXERT A REAL IF SUBTLE INFLUENCE OVER PRIVATE OPINIONS WHICH CAN TRANSLATE INTO PUBLIC ATTITUDES UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS, AND STUDENTS WHO SOME DAY WILL OCCUPY IMPORTANT POSITIONS IN SOCIETY. ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT WISH TO EXAGGERATE IMPORTANCE OF BULLETIN, IT NONETHELESS REMAINS, ALONG WITH VOA, ONLY MEANS OF CONTINUOUS U.S. CONTACT WITH IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF VIENTIANE'S POPULATION.

5. CONSEQUENTLY, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT BULLETIN ATTEMPT TO CONFORM TO MFA GUIDELINES FOR TEST PERIOD AS OUTLINED ABOVE TO DETERMINE IF BULLETIN CAN CONTINUE TO BE DISTRIBUTED ON PRESENT SCALE OF ABOUT 400 COPIES TO IMPORTANT MEMBERS OF INFORMATION PROGRAM TARGET AUDIENCE MINUS INFORMATION WHICH LPDR WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

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READ AS ATTACKS ON OTHER COMMUNIST COUNTRIES.
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Message Attributes

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From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761150/aaaabqyw.tel
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Margaret P. Grafeld
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